

Elana Meyers Taylor elected president of Women's Sports Foundation

By LOIS ELFMAN

Special to the AmNews

It's summertime and bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor is working hard to rehab a partially torn Achilles tendon suffered just before this year's Olympic Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea. The injury did not stop Meyers Taylor from claiming her third consecutive Olympic medal in the bobsled, but she knows she has to get back to full strength to resume on-ice training.

Meyers Taylor, 33, took up the sport of bobsled in 2007 after being a stand-out softball player. She began as the brakeman, but after winning bronze in the two-woman bobsled at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver switched to pilot, wanting more control over her destiny.

"The main thing I love the most about bobsled is the actual going down the hill. It is the biggest rush I could ever imagine. When I hit it right and when I'm nailing my corners, it feels like I'm flying," said Meyers Taylor.

Since becoming a pilot, she has also been instrumental in bringing new talent into the sport. A sense of community has been essential in building women's bobsledding. Every year, she's raced with four to six different brakemen, most of whom came from track and field.

"The biggest struggle has actually been teaching a team atmosphere to people who have grown up their entire lives in most cases doing an individual sport," said Meyers Taylor. "It's a really fun challenge, but it has been a challenge to make sure every-



Bobsledder Elana Meyers Taylor is president-elect of the Women's Sports Foundation.

body is doing everything possible for the entire team."

She continued, "Every time you go out on the line, you want to beat whoever is next to you. At the same time—especially at this phase of my career—it's about growing the sport and giving more opportunities for women."

Seeing the big picture, Meyers Taylor is also intently focused on her advocacy work for girls and women in sports. She is the president-elect of the Women's Sports Foundation, and although her term doesn't officially begin until January 2019, she is filling in for current WSF president, freestyle skier Grete Eliassen, who recently gave birth to her second child.



Elana Meyers Taylor (front) has won medals in the two-woman bobsled at the last three Olympic Winter Games (USA Bobsled & Skeleton photos).

"I've always had a passion for working to improve the lives and rights of athletes," said Meyers Taylor, who is looking forward to the WSF Salute to Women in Sports Oct. 17. "Women have always been under-supported and under-served in sports. Fortunately, I came along after Title IX and was able to reap the benefits of that

and go to school with a softball scholarship, but that's still not an opportunity that a lot of girls have."

She added, "They don't have the resources to get to that next level. It starts at the grassroots and having the coaching and structure at the grassroots to allow children to have that participation. I'm passionate about that."

The Red Sox Black stars provide inspiration for young players of color

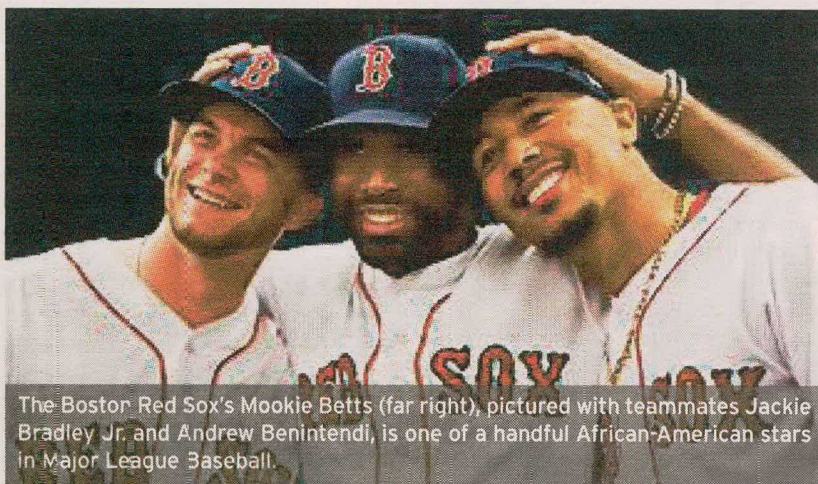
By JAIME C. HARRIS

Special to the AmNews

The number of aspiring African-Americans seeking to play Major League Baseball has dwindled over the past five decades. However, the youth who still dream of becoming Major League players can look to the Boston Red Sox for inspiration, particularly their superstar right fielder Mookie Betts.

The 25-year-old from Nashville, Tenn., is a leading candidate for American League MVP. When the Red Sox faced the Toronto Blue Jays Wednesday, Betts was atop the American League in batting with a .341 average, second in runs scored with 91 and third in the commonly referenced analytics statistic Wins Above Replacement at 7.1. He was also tied with the Yankees Giancarlo Stanton for eighth in home runs with 26 and had knocked in 58 runs primarily from the lead-off position.

Betts is joined in the Red Sox lineup by fellow African-American Jackie Bradley Jr., a former star at the University of South Caroli-



The Boston Red Sox's Mookie Betts (far right), pictured with teammates Jackie Bradley Jr. and Andrew Benintendi, is one of a handful African-American stars in Major League Baseball.

na, who is arguably the most spectacular center fielder in baseball, as his catches regularly make the evening's highlights. Shortstop Xander Bogaerts, a native of the Caribbean island of Aruba, is another standout Black player for the American League front runners, which at 80-34 held the best record in baseball by seven games in the win column as of last night (Wednesday).

Red Sox pitcher David Price, like

Betts, a native of Tennessee, is one of the pre-eminent African-American pitchers of this generation. The five-time All-Star, 2012 AL Cy Young Award winner and two-time AL earned run average leader has a career record of 138-74. He is 11-6 this season in 22 starts with a 3.93 ERA.

It seems paradoxical that the Red Sox have become the standard bearer for Black players because they were the last team in baseball to integrate

after Jackie Robinson broke MLB's color barrier in April 1947, calling up Pumpsie Green from the minor leagues to the majors in 1959.

Tuesday, the Mamie Johnson Little League from Washington, D.C., was eliminated from earning a spot in the venerable Little League World Series by losing their second game in the mid-Atlantic Regional. The Little League World Series was founded in 1947 and is held every August in Williamsport, Pa.

The team has garnered national attention after becoming the first predominantly African-American team to win the D.C. Little League Championship in the game's 31-year history and advance to the mid-Atlantic Regional. The squad is named after the legendary Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, the first female pitcher to play in the Negro Leagues. Johnson died in December 2017 in Washington, D.C.

Although the team embodies the spirit and legacy of Johnson, they have Betts and other Black Red Sox for a more current source of hope and motivation.

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